

## **Promoting Free Speech and Transparency in Elections**

Whereas, the ability of voters to evaluate issues and candidates and make informed decisions is the cornerstone of our democracy; and

Whereas, a key part of making an informed decision is the ability to evaluate who is advocating the ideas or endorsing candidates being considered; and

Whereas, Texas has a long history of requiring transparency and disclosure in the political process; and

Whereas, Texas has chosen not to place limits on political spending to protect the rights of individuals to freely give money and fully participate in the political process; and

Whereas, at the same time, voters have a right to know who is funding the political information they receive so they can evaluate the information and possible motives of those who are providing it; and

Whereas, knowing who is giving money to try to influence elections is the only way to ensure transparency and allow voters to make fully informed choices; and

Whereas, an individual's constitutional right of free speech can be threatened when his or her voice is drowned out by outside sources who secretly aim to influence elections and legislation; and

Whereas, the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia wrote: "Requiring people to stand up in public for their political acts fosters civic courage, without which democracy is doomed." And now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Texas Federation of Republican Women supports legislation to clarify that organizations engaged in political advocacy must publicly disclose their donors just as candidates and political action committees do. This legislation should not apply to religious congregations or groups primarily engaged in providing charitable services, but specifically to those organizations which primarily engage in formal political advocacy for candidates, causes or legislation.